Bay-Delta Sport Fishing Enhancement Stamp Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2007, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Headquarters

<u>Attendees</u>

Jim Crenshaw, Chair John Beuttler, Committee Ken Jones, Committee John Ryzanych, Committee Phil Havlicek, Committee Jim Edgar, Committee Carter Fickes, Committee

Terry Foreman, DFG Karen Mitchell, DFG Heather McIntire, DFG

Whitey Rasmussen, CSBA Jackson Chapman, CSBA John Banks, CSBA Gary Adams, CSBA Bob Rosalli, CSBA Cliff Rich, CSBA

Minutes

Jim Crenshaw brought a Motion to accept the January 18, 2007 meeting minutes as written. The Motion was seconded. The Committee voted and unanimously approved the minutes.

Introduction of Terry Foreman

Terry Foreman accepted the Fisheries Program Manager position in the Fisheries Branch and is now the liaison for the BDSFES Advisory Committee.

Terry came from Inland Deserts Region where he was a Senior Biologist over inland fisheries, hunt programs and supervised two wildlife areas. Terry has been part of statewide fisheries management issues for many years within DFG through his role on the Fisheries Management Committee. Currently, his staff covers inland fishery regulations, the Central Valley Angler Survey, Wild and Heritage Trout Program, Lakes and Reservoirs, and BDSFES staff.

Action Log

The Committee reviewed the Action Log items.

Financial Overview

The Committee was satisfied with the revised and updated BDSFES Financial Overview.

Sturgeon Punch Card Funding

The Committee wants to know if the \$35,000 of BDSFES revenues that is going to fund production of the sturgeon punch card is a one-time expenditure or will it be an annual expenditure.

 ACTION ITEM: DFG will find out how often BDSFES revenues will be used to fund production of sturgeon punch cards; how long is the first printing anticipated to last, and what are the cost projections for the next three years.

Educational Strategy

The Educational Strategy needs to provide the link between the projects and how they directly benefit anglers. This information needs to be added to the website.

 ACTION ITEM: Rob Titus will provide a write-up on how the Central Valley Angler Survey benefits anglers.

Rob is working with the *Fish Sniffer* to create a feature article about the Central Valley Angler Survey. This will be a good opportunity to showcase the link between angler benefits and the survey and how BDSFES funds are used.

DFG needs to improve communication with the anglers to address perceived credibility issues. Anglers need to be made aware of what DFG is doing, why it is being done, and how it benefits anglers. Outreach efforts need to support research programs, with information provided in a format that lay people will understand.

<u>Central Valley Angler Survey</u> (Dr. Rob Titus, DFG)

The Central Valley Angler Survey (CVAS) is funded by the Sport Fish Restoration Grant (75%) and the BDSFES (25%). The survey area includes the Sacramento, Feather, Yuba, American, Mokelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus rivers, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to the Carquinez Straits. The objective of this project is to conduct an angler survey, analyze collected data, and prepare reports describing angler use and catch for all species. The focus of the survey is on fisheries involving key anadromous species where contact with naturally produced Central Valley steelhead is most likely: Chinook salmon, steelhead/rainbow trout, sturgeon, striped bass, and American shad.

The CVAS is the primary angler survey for anadromous fishes in the Central Valley, California, but several major coordination and collaboration activities have been initiated with other DFG units. The CVAS will interface with the DFG Ocean Salmon Project and the Central Valley Chinook salmon constant fraction-marking program. In addition, coordination with the DFG Bay-Delta Region striped bass and sturgeon survey being conducted in the Delta provides greater geographic coverage by the CVAS.

Much of FY 05/06 was used to staff the project and to begin start-up activities such as boat, motor, and other major equipment purchases, and to arrange leases on facilities, including a satellite office on the upper Sacramento River. The BDSFES Fund provided \$290,389 to the CVAS for FY05/06, but because the project was not at full staff and operating during the first half of the FY, only \$85,359 of BDSFES funds was spent. The BDSFES Fund provided \$266,000 to the project for FY06/07 but only and estimated \$113,000 was spent.

<u>Presentation on Sturgeon</u> (Marty Gingras, DFG)

Native to California, white and green sturgeon are anadromous and move from salt and brackish water to freshwater to spawn. Sturgeon are long-lived and can live to be 100 years or older. Reaching sexual maturity at around 15 years, mature females spawn every 2 to 4 years. Large females produce many more eggs than smaller counterparts. Spawning success is related to very high flow years. All of these factors: long life, late sexual maturity and infrequent spawning contribute to the vulnerability of the sturgeon population. Green sturgeon were federally listed as threatened in 2006. White sturgeon are not listed, but the American Fisheries Society considers their survival conservation dependent.

Environmental factors have also contributed to the decline of sturgeon and other fisheries. Delta pumping removes and changes water flows and levels. It also draws juvenile fish into the pumps where their survival significantly decreases. Introductions of new species have changed the food web in the delta. Toxins in the environment are impacting survival of adult and juvenile fish. Studies on striped bass show that striped bass reared in delta water will produce less viable eggs than the striped bass reared in well water. This or similar impacts are likely with many fish species within the delta.

Sturgeon populations are estimated by tagging, estimating catch-per-unit-effort, and through monitoring fish salvage at the state and federal pumping plants. Estimates from all three methods show a decline in abundance. Population estimates from tag returns are highly variable. The most recent tag return data estimate sturgeon abundance near 25,000. In the late 1990's, the estimate was greater than 125,000. The recreational catch data show that fewer large sturgeon are being caught. The number of juvenile sturgeon collected at the state and federal pumping facilities decreased to low levels beginning in 1985 through 1994 and then again in 2000.

Sturgeon Forensics

A Sturgeon Forensic Proposal was brought before the Committee several months ago and the Committee did not recommend this proposal because they believed the costs were too high. The Wildlife Investigation Branch responded by taking out all the large and expensive pieces of equipment and contracting that work out to UC Davis. This proposal covers tissue and egg collections and processing to create a reference collection that can be used to identify sources of caviar, sturgeon and sturgeon blood and tissue samples. In support of this proposal, DFG Enforcement believes this project can improve their conviction rate, but the Committee felt that currently there is not enough certainty to ensure convictions in court and that it would be better for the Committee to support a sturgeon fisheries management plan.

John Beuttler – The aquaculture industry should step up and fund this. They should have a vested interest in reducing the commercialization of illegal sturgeon market. I'm not going with this unless there is scientific certainty.

Jim Edgar – There is nothing in the proposal that talks about the likelihood of success. There are so many problems with sturgeon how crucial is this? Now that the regulations have been changed it should reduce illegal take. Is this really the biggest sturgeon issue at this point? Someone at DFG should come to us and tell us what the priorities for sturgeon are and what is not. Money would be better spent on a hatchery or on a management plan.

John Ryzanych – If there is a commercial fishery that is producing fish they need to assume the costs associated with this. I would be more inclined to support a project when we are more likely to get significant results.

They can't move forward if they don't get this money.

John Ryzanych – There must be other funding sources.

Phil Havlicek – If you looked at his analysis, the big fish have the greatest impact on everything. Illegal poachers target large spawners. Those illegal fish will have a greater impact on the overall population. If poaching has such a large impact on sturgeon, then this stuff can help us with identification of legal and illegal fish then it would be a good use of money.

Jim Edgar – That could well be. The questions that are unanswered are: will we be able to get more people convicted? We are convicting poachers now; how would this change? Do we have the people in the field to enforce this?

Carter Fickes – I am caught in the middle of this one. Sport fishermen are also responsible to assist with this.

John Beuttler – I'm not concerned if this project will move forward with or without our funding. There are no assurances that the court will use this. Is it reliable enough? We would need to see that information. Would you rather spend the money on a fishery management plan or on a project that "might" help? The technical questions I'd like to have answered; how much is this going to help in the courtroom?

MOTION – Motion to approve the Sturgeon Forensic proposal SECOND – Phil Havlicek
In favor – Phil Havlicek
Opposed – Ken Jones, John Ryzanych, John Beuttler, Jim Edgar Abstained – Jim Crenshaw, Carter Fickes

John Ryzanych – This could be a very good tool. It should be part of an overall fisheries management plan.

Jim Edgar – This can be brought back, but put into context of other sturgeon projects so that its priority can be placed.

Carter Fickes – We need more input. Would like to see this in the overall fisheries plan for sturgeon.

Ken Jones – Role of commercial aquaculture group and the over all sturgeon needs.

Black Bass Tournament Release Boat

The proposal that was originally presented to the Committee was to fix up an old release boat. Things have changes and we are now trying to purchase a release boat and then get a service contact for operations. The proposal has changed significantly and I would like a new vote for the new direction this proposal has taken.

This boat will provide services to black bass tournaments in the delta.

Carter Fickes – The existing boat is too old and small for delta black bass. It was impossible to get funds to fix up the old boat and the boat has become inadequate. Bass tournaments bring in a lot of money to communities where the tournaments are held. To handle the number of fish caught in the tournaments we need a new method to keep the fish alive. The little boat can't handle the number and size of fish being caught in the Delta.

It seems to be that the black bass tournaments are a big industry now. If there is that much money going around why are we buying this boat?

Black bass anglers pay for the stamp, and there isn't much we can do to support the black bass anglers.

Carter Fickes – Black Bass Action Committee (BBAC) suggested we can get a public access, release boat, something for our money. There are more tournaments and the boat we have is falling apart. So this proposal resulted from the constituents. It improves survival, it's good for anglers, and it's good PR. We get some bang for our buck.

Phil Havlicek – The BBAC has 52 clubs with 30-50 members per club. This is only one bass club, there are many in addition to BBAC. This is no different than us rebuilding a pier, in fact it is better.

John Beuttler – We do have a number of small club tournaments that are just groups of people that go out and fish. Their club is for sport and conservation. This boat would supply a boat to these smaller groups as well. We talked about making this a multi-species boat. We need a solution for how we address the hatchery salmon releases.

Jim Edgar – My concern is scope creep - from 18k to 50k plus a service contract. If we buy the boat, are we looking at a significant amount for operation and maintenance? The service contract may need to include a fee for use to reduce the annual costs.

MOTION – Motion to approve the bass boat proposal **SECOND** –

Opposed – John Ryzanych

Approved – Phil Havlicek, Jim Crenshaw, Ken Jones, John Beuttler, Jim Edgar Abstained – Carter Fickes

PSN Update

The Proposal Solicitation Notice will be released next week. Applicants will have five to six weeks to prepare their proposals and submit them to the Department by May 18. The DFG Technical Review Team (TRT) will meet in June to conduct an initial review of the proposals to identify any administrative, technical, and scientific problems, determine if field evaluations are necessary, and whether any supplemental information is necessary. Over the summer, the TRT and their field evaluators will review the proposals in more detail to evaluate their biological and technical soundness, comment, and rate the proposals. In September, the TRT will again meet to review the comments and scores and assess how well the proposals meet BDSFES goals and objectives. The scored proposals will then be forwarded to the Advisory Committee. The Committee will meet in November to rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria developed by the Committee and recommend funding priorities to the Director.

John Beuttler – Would like to see a DFG proposal process. We need to see what the DFG priorities are. It would be extremely helpful to know what priorities are and let us know what DFG thinks are most helpful to delta issues.

New business

Committee Vacancy

Phil Havlicek – We need to fill the vacancy. There have been CSBA members here at all the meetings. You should go through the process to apply. Only Committee members should sit at the table and discuss the agenda items.

 ACTION ITEM: Add to the agenda for next meeting a discussion to improve efficiency of Committee meetings and review protocol that only Committee members sit at the table and participate in discussions. A public comment session should be provided either at the beginning or end of the meeting.

Legislation Review

John Beuttler – We need more cooperation from the Department's legislative branch so anything that we are made aware of changes to the mandate of this Committee.

AB 1270 - This bill would dedicate 25% of BDSFES unspent funds to replenishing bay striped bass and sturgeon populations. This bill is supported by CSBA. The CSBA has not discussed this legislation. These species are already a funding priority for the Committee.

- ACTION ITEM: Provide copy of proposed legislation to the Committee members
- ACTION ITEM: Contact Julie Oltmann for additional information. Why were we not notified that this was moving forward?

AB 1187 - This bill would impose a \$15,000-\$40,000 penalty on people who are convicted of sturgeon poaching.

Striped Bass Issues (Terry Foreman)

Neil, Sonke and Terry met with Director Ryan Broddrick. He directed Mr. Manji to arrange a special joint meeting with the SBSF and BDSFES Advisory Committees to discuss striped bass issues and discuss the roles of the committees. No business will be conducted at the special meeting. The Department will respond to the letter from the Striped Bass Stamp Fund Advisory Committee and address the conflict, policy and relationships with USFWS and other entities. The department will give a presentation addressing striped bass biology in detail.

John Beuttler – Currently CSBA does not have a seat on this committee and it does not have a seat on the SBSF committee. The Director should ensure there is an invitation to the meeting as well because they are not included in either advisory committee.

- ACTION ITEM: Add to agenda to have a review and discussion of the Four Pumps Agreement funded projects.
- ACTION ITEM: Add to agenda to have someone discuss striped bass hatcheries and their feasibility.

Next Meeting

The next BDSFES Advisory Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, May 29, 2007 at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Headquarters.